

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 17538

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SP, FR

SUBJECT: FRENCH PERCEPTIONS OF SPAIN'S EVOLUTION

1. QUAI SOUTHERN EUROPE DEPUTY DIRECTOR GELADE DISCUSSED WITH EMBOFF JULY 3 PERSONAL CONCERN REGARDING THE SPANISH SUCCESSION PROBLEM. HE SAID IMMEDIATE RESULT OF FRANCO DEATH OR INCAPACITY WOULD PRESUMABLY BE ASCENSION OF JUAN CARLOS. AT THAT POINT, HOWEVER, PROBLEMS BEGIN. HE CRITICIZED LIMITS IMPOSED BY FRANCO (UNDER RIGHTISTS PRESSURE) ON REFORM PROGRAM OF PRIME MINISTER ARIAS. GELADE EXPECTS THAT, AS RESULT THEREOF, COMMUNISTS AND OTHER FAR-LEFT PARTIES WILL BE ONLY ORGANIZED FORCES, WHILE DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENTS REMAIN UNPREPARED. THUS, FRANCO'S DECISION TO BLOCK ARIAS' VERY FIRST STEPS TOWARDS DEMOCRACY HAD PRECLUDED ANY STRUCTURE FOR FACILITATING SUCCESSION.

2. GELADE BELIEVES THAT AFTER FRANCO, POLITICAL LEFT WILL BE IN PERFECT POSITION TO CREATE CHAOS WHICH IN TURN WOULD PROVOKE MILITARY TAKEOVER. WHILE HE FEELS SPANISH ARMY TOTALLY UNLIKE PORTUGUESE, GELADE ASSUMES IT IS NOT MONOLITHIC AND AT LEAST SOME PARTS MUST BE COMMUNIST-PENETRATED. HE LEFT THESE THOUGHTS
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DANGLING WITHOUT DRAWING FINAL CONCLUSION AS TO

WHETHER MILITARY TAKEOVER WOULD LEAD TO LEFT OR TO RIGHT. HE CONCLUDED THAT REGARDLESS OF TENDENCY, SPANISH ARMY - WHICH CONSIDERS ITSELF GUARANTOR OF SPAIN'S FUTURE - LIKELY TO BLOCK FURTHER EVOLUTION TOWARDS DEMOCRACY.

3. GELADE DENIED ANY KNOWLEDGE OF SPANISH OPPOSITION ACTIVITIES, EVEN IN FRANCE. HE SPECIFIED THAT HE HIMSELF NOT IN TOUCH WITH "DEMOCRATIC JUNTA" WHICH HE CONSIDERS COMMUNIST-DOMINATED. AS FOR ACTIVITY WITHIN SPAIN, GELADE ASSUMES CP ACTIVISTS MUST NUMBER WELL OVER 5,000, ALTHOUGH THAT MIGHT BE NUMBER OF CARD CARRYING MEMBERS. IN THIS CONNECTION, HE POINTED OUT THERE ARE ILLEGAL LABOR UNIONS IN SPAIN WHICH ARE CP-ORIENTED.

4. SUMMING UP, GELADE WARNED AGAINST UNDERESTIMATING POWER OF COMMUNISTS IN POST-FRANCO ERA. HE IS PESSIMISTIC ABOUT SPANISH MILITARY TAKEOVER. HE SAID SPAIN HAS EVOLVED TO POINT WHERE ITS THEORETICAL SUITABILITY FOR DEMOCRACY CAN NO LONGER BE DOUBTED; THIS IS RESULT OF ENORMOUS MODERNIZATION STRIDES TAKEN IN LAST DOZEN YEARS. FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM FOR GELADE IS THAT GOS HAS NOT PERMITTED DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL PARTIES TO MOVE FORWARD APACE WITH SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROGRESS.
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